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Citizenship Education, Diversity and Social Class

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Citizenship education, diversity and social class

Tony Gallagher, Julie Healy & Paul Connolly

**Citizenship Education and Social Justice Seminar
Queen's University Belfast, 2005**



Interest in citizenship education

- globalisation & decline in social capital
- political & economic change in East/Central Europe
- declining political participation in West, especially among the young



Citizenship and diversity

*A main aim for the whole community should be to find or restore a sense of **common citizenship**, including a **national identity** that is secure enough to find a place for the plurality of nations, cultures, ethnic identities and religions long found in the United Kingdom. Citizenship education creates **common ground** between different ethnic and religious identities.*

Crick Report, 1998



Northern Ireland

- EMU & Cultural Heritage
- Local and Global Citizenship
 - diversity & inclusion
 - equality & social justice
 - democracy & active participation
 - human rights & social responsibilities



Challenges for LGC

- curriculum delivery matches ambition
- promoting diversity over the common good
- absent basis for diversity: social class
 - consequences of selective education
 - differential experience of political violence



Data Collection

- OFMDFM funded study into children's understanding of community relations
- Four Primary Schools and three Nursery Schools
- 276 interviews with children aged 3-4, 7-8 and 10-11 years
- Broadly ethnographic methodology



Key Issues

- Social class that tended to differentiate the children in terms of their perspectives and experiences
- The local area plays a significant role in influencing their perspectives and experiences



Four Localities

- Two areas with high levels of sectarian tensions / conflict, high social and economic deprivation
- Two areas relatively free from sectarian tensions / conflict, affluent and residentially mixed



Children living in interface area

Thomas

"The Provies give out these wee lists of people in the park who are like smoking and drinking, know like teenagers and that. Something about telling their mummies and all, and Provies like to stop you from sniffing [glue] and all, if they see you sniffing and all. It's a wee bit bad in some ways and a wee bit good in others"

Paul

"I like some of the things they do"



Children living in interface area

Elaine

"Miss, know the way when all the fighting was on, the UDA was fighting with the UVF [....] And do you know what I think would be smart, just going to together Miss"

[...]

Elaine

"Someone says they're Johnny Adair's cousin ...who is it?"

Gillian

"Sonia"

Elaine

"Sonia! But Sonia likes the UVF!"



Children living in mixed area

- Philip "I don't know what it was but I heard something about a riot in North Belfast"
- Researcher "Did anyone else hear that? Michael did you?"
- Michael "I just heard that people had started fighting them and throwing petrol bombs"
- Researcher "Did you see anything or was this something that you heard?"
- Philip "I heard about it on the news"



Children living in mixed area

Luke "My mum owns a shop there, it's dangerous. [...] Yeah, it's crazy... red, white and blue everywhere"

Researcher "So why do people up here not do that?"
[...]

Luke "Well I think people up here are all more politer than further on down and that's what makes the difference"

Researcher "When you say 'politer' what do you mean?"

Steve "Like better/"

Luke "More sensible/"

Steve "We know how to look after things/"



Children living in mixed area

(Talking about 'Give My Head Peace')

Connie [pretend Belfast accent]"
Uncle Andy!"

Sarah "It's a laugh"

Researcher" Do you think it's like real life?"

Connie "Not our real life anyway!"

[laughter]

Clara "No, thank goodness"



Children living in interface area

Gavin

"Miss, some of them are starting to bomb England, The Real IRA that's what they call them [laughs] the Real IRA"

James

"No it wasn't, it was the Israel troops that blew up the Omagh bomb"

[....]

Researcher

"Why do you think people from Israel would try to blow up Omagh"

James

"Because they don't like people from Omagh"

[.....]

James

"Oh maybe it was the Yugoslavians"



Children living in mixed area

Katrina "Whenever there was that violence at the school in Ardoyne it would have been good to talk about that more"

Researcher "Was there any talk about it at all?"

Katrina "No. We talked about September 11, but that was with our old teacher"

Vicky "We also talked about it in November with our American teacher"



Conclusions

- children's life-worlds mediated by social position
- experience & understanding linked to locality
- importance of pupil voice